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EUR/CE for Tom Yeager
EUR/OHI for Amb C. Kennedy
EUR/PPD for Jeanne Briganti

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: NEW JUSTICE MINISTER LOOKS TO U.S. FOR JUDICIAL

REFORM MODELS; PLEDGES SUPPORT ON RESTITUTION CASES

¶1. (U) Summary: (U) In the Ambassador's first official meeting with the new Minister of Justice Ales Zalar, the Minister pledged to look into pending U.S. denationalization and property restitution cases which remain bogged down in Slovenian courts. Zalar also reiterated his great interest in collaborative judicial reform programming and the continuation of Embassy-designed prosecutorial training. In an Embassy meeting a few days later with State Prosecutor Barbara Brezigar, Brezigar expressed the need for ongoing collaboration in anti-corruption efforts, in particular in prosecuting economic crime and improving media relations. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador met with new Justice Minister Ales Zalar on December 11. Like all previous cabinet meetings, the tone was warm and friendly - not least because both Zalar and his State Secretary are both previous IV program participants. Zalar asked for a list of pending property restitution cases and pledged to look into them and provide a status for each case, and possibly a timeline on their resolution. Zalar also presented a laundry list of areas for cooperation and possible training, among them the need for training in personal (consumer) bankruptcies and cyber crimes, as well as study visits to the U.S. to assist in the establishment of family courts and a judicial training center.

¶3. (U) During the Ambassador's meeting with State Prosecutor Barbara Brezigar on December 15, Brezigar confirmed her office's continuing interest in training focused on the prosecution of economic crime and development of skills to improve media relations. Brezigar and Zalar had not yet met to discuss collaboration between their two offices, but with the nomination of prosecutors to key positions in the Ministry of Justice, it appears that Zalar is trying to improve cooperation between the two independent offices.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The future of integrated governmental anti-corruption efforts in the country may still be up in the air. The efforts of Zalar and Brezigar, politically-left and right respectively, will determine just how well prosecutors, judges and police cooperate in the new government. The future of the country's anti-corruption commission - or the network of other governmental bodies tasked with anti-corruption responsibilities - may be even more uncertain. Zalar was unwilling or unable to comment on the commission, stating that its fate would be known in the coming months. Brezigar expressed displeasure with the lack of cooperation from the commission, whose leadership was often at odds - of a political and personal nature - with the former Prime Minister's office.

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